

# Community gets a sneak preview of the Liberty Theatre

Grand opening events are slated for March 17-19

By **HEATHER ACHESON**

Post-Record staff

First Friday attendees got a sneak peek at some of the changes that have taken place recently inside the Liberty Theatre, which is slated to officially reopen on March 17.

"We've added paint and carpet, cleaned the seats and floors, and added new decor and artwork to sparkle it up a bit," said Managing Director Rand Thornsley, who signed a lease with building owners Gary and Marilyn Webberley of Kirkland, Wash., in January.

Although heavy rain put a bit of a damper on the first public open house since the theater's abrupt closure in

September 2009, Thornsley said he received a lot positive feedback.

"Everyone who came by was really excited about it," he said. "I got a really good vibe that people think we are really on track with what we are doing."

A bigger splash is planned for next week, when local school music programs and the Downtown Camas Association will be the beneficiaries of a grand opening celebration.

The three-day event begins on Thursday, March 17, with a St. Patrick's Day showing of "Darby O'Gill and the Little People," and continues on Friday, March 18 when the "Grease Sing-A-Long," movie will hit the big screen.

On Saturday, March 19, from 4 to 10 p.m. live music, food, beverages and

raffle prizes will take center stage.

Camas's Nuestra Mesa will be serving food, as well as beer, wine and margaritas in the theater's upstairs 21-and-older lounge, and the snack bar will be open for all ages.

During the benefit concert, performances are expected from The Go Project, Social Gravy, Jon Hecox, Bob Calhoun, Julia's Misfortune and Storm Runner, as well as Camas School District students.

Chris Roberts and John Kerridge are the members of The Go Project, which performs a unique blend of instrumental, electronic jazz, rock and alternative music at locations around the Portland Metro Vancouver area, including a number of benefit events.

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After being closed for more than a year, the Liberty Theatre in downtown Camas was open for the public to take a peek inside during First Friday events. Although no movies were being shown, owner Rand Thornsley (center) and co-managers Jodi Vera (left) and Jim Burns (right) and assistant manager Fabiana Thomas (not pictured) were on hand to greet visitors. The three-day grand opening event will begin Thursday, March 17. The celebration will include movies, live music, food and beverages.

## Grand opening

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Roberts, a Fern Prairie resident, said he was interested in participating in the local fund raiser as a way to support youth and the importance of music education.

"It's something I wanted to take part in because I have all four of my kids in the Camas public school system," Roberts said. "Through my band and through other people's music we are hoping to raise awareness about the need to keep music programs thriving — it's critical."

Chris and wife Melissa's daughters, Josie, 13, Natalie, 11, Elizabeth, 9, and Stella, 7, are involved in music either through their schools or through private lessons. Josie plays the clarinet in the Liberty Middle School band.

"They are all upcoming struggling musicians," he joked.

Roberts is looking forward to the concert, as well as the re-opening of the iconic downtown Camas theater.

"It's really turning into a big community event," he said. "The theater looks so beautiful, it's incredible."

Once it re-opens, the facility will show second-run Hollywood movies, as well as international films and

### LIBERTY THEATRE GRAND OPENING EVENTS

**Thursday, March 17 at 6 p.m.**

To mark St. Patrick's Day, there will be a showing of "Darby O'Gill and the Little People," the 1959 Irish classic with Sean Connery. Ticket price is \$2 per person.

**Friday, March 18 at 5:30 and 8 p.m.**

Showing of "Grease Sing-A-Long," the 1978 classic starring Olivia Newton John and John Travolta. Attendees are encouraged to dress in 1950s attire. Ticket price is \$2 per person.

**Saturday, March 19, from 4 to 10 p.m.**

A benefit for Camas School District music programs and the Downtown Camas Association will include food, drinks and raffle drawings. Live music will be provided by Jon Hecox, Social Gravy, The Go Project, Bob Calhoun, Julia's Misfortune, Storm Runner, and there will be special performances by Camas students. Cost is \$5 per person.

The Liberty Theatre's website is at [www.camasliberty.com](http://www.camasliberty.com). On Facebook, search "Liberty Theatre of Camas-Washougal."

documentaries. There will also be film festival style programming including outdoor recreational and environmental film screenings.

After the opening weekend, cost for a general admission movie ticket at the Liberty will be \$3.50.

Most of the changes to the building have so far been cosmetic. Thornsley said plans are in the works to open a small food service

kitchen with a limited menu, some seating and a take-out counter this summer. The exact timing will depend on how revenues pan out during the first few months of operations.

In addition, a remodel will be completed in the main theater's balcony area, where patrons 21 and older will have food, beer and wine service available.

The facility's smaller 33-

seat theater will not be open until later this year, after it receives a makeover of sorts. Thornsley said all of the current seating will be removed, and replaced with "lounge seating," including chairs and tables for about 29 people. The cinema will show independent, foreign and documentary films.

Thornsley has managed and owned small movie theaters — primarily in Alaska — for the past four decades. In addition to overseeing the operations at the Liberty, he continues to serve as the director of programming at the Bear Tooth Theatrepub in Anchorage, Alaska.

Thornsley has so far hired three people to help run the Liberty. Jim Burns and Jodi Vera are co-managers, while Fabiana Thomas is the assistant manager.

Vera said she is thrilled to be a part of the re-opening of the Liberty.

"I'm absolutely ecstatic," she said Friday. "I was excited about this place before I even applied."

As the community's anticipation leading up to the March 17 opening continues to build, Thornsley and his staff know they still have a lot of work to do.

"I'm sure we'll be working right down to the last minute."